

Reidsville Review, February 02, 2011

By Mary Dolan

U.S. Rep. Brad Miller, the fifth-term Democrat who defeated political newcomer Bill Randall in last November's election to continue serving the 13th Congressional District, paid one of his first visits of the new term to Rockingham County Monday.

Miller is now part of a new Democratic minority serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. Last year's hotly contested election led to the upheaval of numerous Democratic seats, shifting Congress to a Republican majority and leaving Democrats with a narrow majority margin in the Senate.

Despite these changes, Miller said he remains committed to serving his constituency. Though he has been a part of the minority before, Miller admitted this one is "a much more stridently partisan Congress."

Miller said he worries Republicans will cling to that sense of contention, rather than focusing on negotiations. Much of that contention stems, he said, "from the most strident fringe" of the Republican base.

Miller said his goal this term is to work together.

"... I'm more than willing to try to work to find the common ground," Miller said.

Health care overhaul legislation that passed last year at the encouragement of President Barack Obama has come under fire from Republican opposition; the Republican Party has promised to repeal the law this year.

Miller said he has no problem re-examining the legislation, which requires Americans to possess either privately-held or government health care, prohibits denial of insurance because of a preexisting condition and broadens the coverage of Medicare and Medicaid. Though he said he's willing to potentially tweak the legislation, he does not support a repeal.

"Repealing it altogether would just put us back where we've been," he said.

Where we've been, Miller said, is a society in which insurance companies made profits at the expense of Americans, set extremely high deductibles and ultimately did not provide adequate coverage.

"I don't want to go back to those days," Miller said.

In addition to health care reform, the other hot-button issue for Miller is the economy, he stated.

"Our economy's still not working very well," he said.

He said too many people remain unemployed, are continuing to foreclose on their homes and are generally disillusioned.

The poor economy has affected people's "sense of security about their future," he said.

"We've got an unemployment rate that's just unacceptable," he said.

Getting Americans – particularly those within his district – back to work, is essential, Miller said. It's not until people are working once again and spending money again, he stated, that the economy will fully bloom. As he has previously noted, Miller said he thinks it's important to look to the science and technology research initiatives taking place in this state and create new jobs based on that.

Within the new framework of the 112th Congress, Miller continues to serve on the science, space and technology House committee and is the ranking Democrat within the energy and environment subcommittee. He also maintains his post on the financial services committee.

To see the new Congress move forward, Miller said, the dialogue between Republicans and Democrats must become more civil.

Miller said he supports the idea of a vigorous national debate but noted the contentions that have bubbled to the surface in recent months must end.

"I think the more immediate step is changing the politics so we are not tolerating the kind of rage and hatred we have seen," he said.